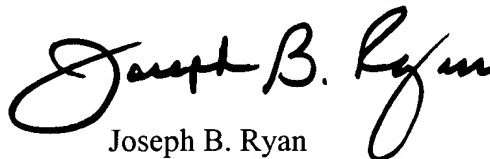


With regard to the §102(e) and §103(a) rejections, Applicant submits herewith a Declaration of Prior Invention Under 37 C.F.R. §1.131. The Declaration is signed by the sole inventor named on the present application. The Declaration and the exhibits attached thereto evidence conception of the invention at least as early as April 29, 1998, and thus prior to the August 4, 1998 effective filing date of the Kalmanek reference. The Declaration and the exhibits attached thereto further evidence due diligence from prior to said effective filing date to the filing of the present application. Applicant believes that the claims of the Kalmanek reference and the present application are not directed to the same invention and are not obvious variants. Applicant is therefore entitled to overcome the §102(e) and §103(a) rejections using a Declaration of Prior Invention Under 37 C.F.R. §1.131, in accordance with MPEP §§706.02(b) and 715.

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the §102(e) and §103(a) rejections. The application is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph B. Ryan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joseph" and last name "Ryan" clearly legible.

Date: November 7, 2003

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